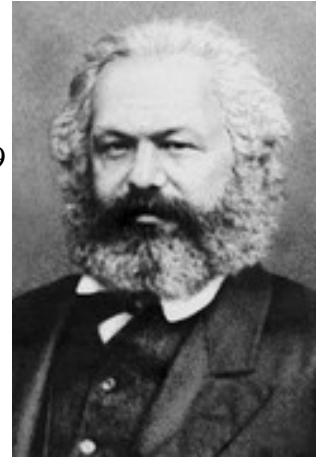


# Jews and Communism

Other pages on this website: [List of Jewish Communists](#), [List of Jewish social movements](#)

A near majority of Jews dominated the top ten to twenty leaders of the Russian Bolshevik Party's first twenty years and the Soviet Union's secret police was "one of the most Jewish" of all of its institutions. In Austria, the leaders of the Austro-Marxism movement were "virtually all" Jewish and Jews played a "central role" in the failed November 1918 coup d'état led by Egon Kisch and his Red Guards. During the German Revolution of 1918–1919 in the Weimar Republic, the Communist uprisings included Spartacus League members Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, and Paul Levi, and Jews held indisputable prominence in its undertaking. The Bavarian Soviet Republic was headed by Eugen Leviné and had in it a minimum of seven other Jewish commissars. In the 1930s Jews controlled a "high proportion of the most sensitive positions" in Hungary, Romania, and Poland, including the Party apparatus, state administration, and especially the Agitprop, foreign service, and secret police. During the Cold War, Jews, mostly from Eastern Europe, accounted for 40–50% of the American Communist Party's membership, and counter to the denial of American Jewish publicists, Jews played a "disproportionately important role" in Soviet and world Communism until the early 1950s. *The Black Book of Communism*, published by Harvard University Press, estimated that approximately 100 million people across the world have been killed by Communism.<sup>[45]</sup>



*Jewish founder of  
Communism, Karl  
Marx*

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## Russia

### 1918 Revolution

British historian Lionel Kochan notes: "By far the most significant Jewish Marxist party was the Bund. [...] It far exceeded other Russian social democratic parties in size and influence."<sup>[1]</sup> In June 1917, the number of Jewish Bolsheviks present at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets was a minimum of 31 percent, in addition 37 percent of Unified Social Democrats were Jews.<sup>[2]</sup> In the 23 October 1917 Bolshevik Central Committee meeting that discussed and voted on a "armed insurrection", 5 of the 12 participants were Jews. Leon Trotsky, Grigory Zinoviev, and Grigory Sokolnikov consisted the three of the seven Politbureau members responsible for directing the October Revolution.<sup>[2]</sup> According to the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia: "Whatever the racial antecedents of their top man, the first Soviet commissariats were largely staffed with Jews. The Jewish position in the Communist movement was well understood in Russia. The White Armies which opposed the Bolshevik government linked Jews and Bolsheviks as common enemies."<sup>[3]</sup> Historian Arkady Vaksberg observes that five Jews shot and killed the last Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II: "There is no getting around the fact that the first



*Leon Trotsky*

violins in the orchestra of death of the Tsar and his family were four Jews — Yankel Yurovsky, Shaia Goloshchekin, Lev Sosnovsky, and Pinkus Vainer (Petr Voikov). The concert master and conductor was Yakov Sverdlov."<sup>[4]</sup> Under Soviet law, anti-semitism was punishable by the death penalty.<sup>[46]</sup>

## **Bolshevik party**

The All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VtsIK) formed during the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets contained 101 members of which 62 were Bolsheviks and included 23 Jews, 20 Russians, 5 Ukrainians, 5 Poles, 4 Balts, 3 Georgians, and 2 Armenians. According to Nahum Rafalkes-Nir, former head of Poale Zion, during the discussion of Bolshevik takeover of the congress all 15 speakers who participated as official representatives were Jews while historian Yuri Slezkine says that it was likely 14. Kamenev and Sverdlov were the first two VtsIK

chairmen which lead the Soviet state. Sverdlov also served at the Party's chief administrator. The first Bolsheviks in charge of Moscow and Petrograd were Kamenev and Zinoviev. Zinoviev also served as the chairman of the Communist International.<sup>[2]</sup> Historian Albert Lindemann notes "it seems beyond serious debate that in the first twenty years of the Bolshevik Party the top ten to twenty leaders included close to a majority of Jews. Of the seven 'major figures' listed in The Makers of the Russian Revolution, four are of Jewish origin."<sup>[5]</sup>

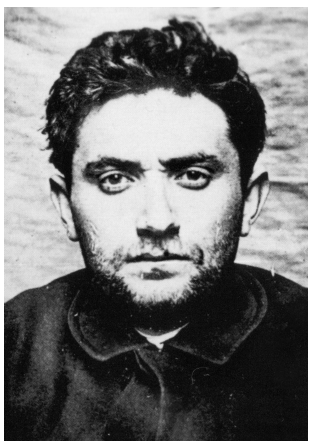
Serving between 1916 and 1917 as United States Ambassador to Russia, David R. Francis, noted that: "The Bolshevik leaders here, most of whom are Jews and 90 percent of whom are returned exiles, care little for Russia or any other country but are internationalists and they are trying to start a worldwide social revolution."<sup>[6]</sup> Between March and June 1919, Captain Montgomery Schuyler, a US military intelligence officer, reported: "It is probably unwise to say this loudly in the United States, but the Bolshevik movement is and has been since its beginning guided and controlled by Russian Jews [...]. More than 300 Jews are (Bolshevik) commissars. Of this number 264 had come from the United States since the downfall of the Imperial government" A United States Senate subcommittee commented in the Congressional Record that by December 1919, 371 members of the 388 member Bolshevik central government led by Zinoviev were Jews.<sup>[7]</sup>

Between 1917 and 1919, Jewish Bolshevik party leaders included Grigory Zinoviev, Moisei Uritsky, Lev Kamenev, Yakov Sverdlov, Grigory Sokolnikov, and Leon Trotsky. Lev Kamenev was of mixed ethnic Russian and Jewish parentage.<sup>[8][9]</sup> Vladimir Lenin's maternal grandfather was Jewish.<sup>[10]</sup> Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda, established in April 1918,<sup>[11]</sup> was headed by Nathan Altman, a Jew, who was responsible for designing the first Soviet flag, state emblem, official seals, and postage stamps.<sup>[12]</sup> Among the 23 council members between 1923 and 1930, five were Jewish.<sup>[8]</sup> In April 1917, Petrograd Soviet's governing bureau had 24 members of which 10 (41.7 percent) were Jews.<sup>[2]</sup>



*Yakov Sverdlov*

## **Soviet Central Committee**



*Grigory Zinoviev*

Between 1919 and 1921, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was a consistent one-fourth Jewish. In 1918, Jews comprised 54 percent of "leading" Party officials in Petrograd, 45 percent of city and provincial Party officials, and 36 percent of Northern District commissars. In 1919, Jews represented three of the five members in Petrograd's trade union council presidium, and in 1920 were 13 out of the 36 members of Petrograd Soviet's Executive Committee. In 1923, Jews in Moscow held 29 percent of the Party's "leading cadres" and 45 percent of the provincial social security administration. Moscow's Party organization was 13.5 percent Jewish, three times the general Jewish population percent.<sup>[2]</sup> According to the 1922 party census, there were 19,564 Jewish Bolsheviks, comprising 5.21% of the total.<sup>[8]</sup> In 1922, an estimated 40 percent of the top leadership of the Soviet Army was Jewish.<sup>[2]</sup> In the mid-1920s, of the 417 members of the Central Executive Committee, the party Central Committee, the Presidium of the Executive of the Soviets of the USSR and the Russian Republic, the People's Commissars, 6% were ethnic Jews.<sup>[8]</sup> In 1929, among members of

the Central Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets there were 402 ethnic Russians, 95 Ukrainians, 55 Jews, 26 Latvians, 13 Poles, and 12 Germans – Jewish representation had declined from 60 members in 1927.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Secret police

In 1918, Jews in the Cheka Soviet secret police constituted 65.5 percent of "responsible officials", 3.7 percent in officials in Moscow, 4.3 percent of commissars, and 8.6 percent of senior officials. Jews constituted 19.1 percent of central apparatus investigators and made up 50 percent (6 out of 12) of the investigators in the department responsible for quelling counter-revolution efforts. In 1923, the "leading" officials of the OGPU, the Cheka's successor, was 15.5 percent Jewish and 50 percent of the Collegium's Secretariat members were Jews. In 1920, 9.1 percent of all members of provincial Cheka offices was Jewish. Russians made up the majority of members, with Latvians being the most overrepresented group.<sup>[14]</sup> In Ukraine, the leadership of the Cheka was "overwhelmingly Jewish" and in early 1919 the "Cheka organizations in Kiev were 75 percent Jewish".<sup>[15]</sup> Jewish scholar Zvi Gitelman observed: "The high visibility of Jews in the Bolshevik regime was dramatized by the large numbers of Jews in the Cheka [...] From the Jewish point of view it was no doubt the lure of immediate physical power which attracted many Jewish youths [...] Whatever the reasons, Jews were heavily represented in the secret police [...] Since the Cheka was the most hated and feared organ of the Bolshevik government, anti-Jewish feelings increased in direct proportion to Cheka terror."<sup>[16]</sup>

The NKVD, OGPU's successor, was "one of the most Jewish of all Soviet institutions."<sup>[17]</sup> By 1934, Jews were the most numerous in the "leading cadres" with 37 Jews compared to 30 Russians, 7 Latvians, 5 Ukrainians, 4 Poles, 3 Georgians, 3 Belorussians, 2 Germans, and 5 assorted others. Jews were in charge of twelve key NKVD departments and directorates which included the police, Gulag labor camps, counterintelligence, surveillance, and economic wrecking. Genrikh Yagoda, also a Jew, served as the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs.<sup>[18]</sup> In January 1937, the top 111 NKVD officials was composed of 42 Jews, 35 Russians, 8 Latvians, and 26 others. At the time Jews still led twelve of twenty NKVD directorates and held seven of the ten departments that made up the Main Directorate for State Security, including the departments of Protection of Government Officials, Counterintelligence, Secret-Political, Special Army Surveillance, Foreign Intelligence, Records, and Prisons. Spying in Western Europe and in the United States and foreign service was "an almost exclusively Jewish specialty." Jews lead the Gulag since its founding in 1930 until near the end of the Great Purge in late November 1938.<sup>[19]</sup>



*Genrikh Yagoda*

## Great Purge

Between 1936 and 1940, after the rapprochement with National Socialist Germany and during the Great Purge, Stalin had largely eliminated Jews from senior party, government, diplomatic, security and military positions.<sup>[20]</sup> The majority of Jews were "not directly affected by the Great Terror, and of those who were, most suffered as members of the political elite."<sup>[21]</sup> Between 1937 and 1938, an estimated 1 percent of all Jews in the Soviet Union were arrested for political crimes in contrast to 16 percent of all Poles and 30 percent of all Latvians.<sup>[22]</sup> In 1939, Stalin directed incoming Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov to "purge the ministry of Jews".<sup>[23]</sup> Although some scholars believe that this decision was taken for primarily domestic reasons,<sup>[23]</sup> others argue it may have been a signal to National Socialist Germany that the USSR was ready for non-aggression talks.<sup>[24][25]</sup> By early 1939, the Jewish proportion of people in the Gulag was "about 15.7 percent lower than their share of the total population."<sup>[22]</sup> According to historian Yakov Etinger, many Soviet state purges of the 1930s were antisemitic in nature, and a more intense policy developed toward the end of World War II.<sup>[26]</sup> Slezkine disputes this stating that "Jews were the only large Soviet nationality [...] that was not targeted for a purge during the Great Terror."<sup>[27]</sup> Stalin in 1952 allegedly said privately that "every Jew is a potential spy for the United States".<sup>[28]</sup>

## Hungary, Romania, and Poland

In Hungary, Romania, and Poland, Jews were in charge of a "high proportion of the most sensitive positions in the Party apparatus, state administration, and especially the Agitprop, foreign service, and secret police." The regimes in the countries "resembled the Soviet Union of the 1920s insofar as they combined the ruling core of the old Communist underground, which was heavily Jewish, with a large pool of upwardly mobile Jewish professionals".<sup>[29]</sup>

In Hungary, Jews were "over-represented in both socialist intellectuals and in communist militants."<sup>[30]</sup> Jewish scholar Howard Sachar notes that the Hungarian Soviet Republic existed "for 135 days [in 1919]" and that "Hungary was ruled by a



Communist dictatorship. Its party boss, Béla Kun, was a Jew. So were 31 of the 49 commissars in Kun's regime."<sup>[31]</sup> According to Hungarian historian István Deák, Jews "held a near monopoly on political power in Hungary during the 133 days of the Soviet Republic in 1919 and again from, roughly, 1947 to 1953, and then again from 1955 to the fall of 1956" and that "political personalities of Jewish origin played a decisive role in 20th-century Hungary".<sup>[32]</sup> Jewish scholar Louis Rapoport credits Kun as being a "cruel tyrant" and that he later served as "Stalin's chief of terror in the Crimea."<sup>[33]</sup> Jews constituted "95 percent of the leading figures" of Kun's regime.<sup>[34]</sup> Tibor Szamuely led all paramilitary efforts and Otto Korvin-Klein operated as the chief political prosecutor. A disproportionate number of Jews were judges, prosecutors, propagandists, and leaders of the youth and women wings.<sup>[35]</sup> The rule of Kun's regime in 1919 became one of the major reasons many Hungarians backed the Final Solution in 1944, despite most Jews being unassociated with them.<sup>[32]</sup> Among those of Jewish origin that ruled Hungary between late 1940s and early 1950s were Mátyás Rákosi, Erno Gero, Mihály Farkas, and József Révai.<sup>[36]</sup>

In Poland, 7 out of 10 of the original Communist leadership was composed of Jews. During the 1930s, they composed between 22 to 26 percent of the overall Communist Party of Poland (KPP) membership, 51 percent of the youth wing (1930), about 65 percent of all Communists in Warsaw (1937), 75 percent of the propaganda wing, 90 percent of the International Red Aid (MOPR), and the majority of Central Committee members.<sup>[30]</sup> The proportion of Jews in the KPP was never lower than 22 percent countrywide, peaking at 35 percent in 1930. The Communist Party of West Belarus and the Communist Party of Western Ukraine had similar percentages. Jews accounted for 54 percent of the field leadership of the KPP in 1935 and 75 percent of the party's propagandists. Jews held the majority of the seats on the Central Committees of the Communist Workers Party of Poland (KPRP) and the KPP.<sup>[37]</sup> Of all Polish political parties the Communist movement most vehemently rejected antisemitism and frequently suggested similar solutions to issues facing Jews as the Bund, the Zionists, and Jewish religious parties did.<sup>[38]</sup> Jewish Communists claimed that "of the highest number of votes the Communists ever polled in Poland, i.e., of the 266,528 votes collected on several lists of front organizations at the Sejm elections of 1928, two-fifths were cast by Jews". Despite significant Jewish presence in the Polish Communist movement they had little support in the wider Polish Jewish community and about 5 percent of all Jewish voters supported the Communist movement.<sup>[37]</sup> Nonetheless Jewish participation in the Polish Communist movement led to the allegation of *Zydokomuna* which had claimed the existence of a Judeo-Communist conspiracy and had become prevalent in interwar Poland, especially after the death of Józef Pilsudski.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Weimar Republic



*Rosa Luxemburg*

During the German Revolution of 1918–1919, the Communist uprisings included Spartacus League members Rosa Luxemburg, Leo Jogiches, and Paul Levi. The Bavarian Soviet Republic was headed by Eugen Leviné and had in it a minimum of seven other Jewish commissars which included Ernst Toller and Gustav Landauer.<sup>[40]</sup> Sarah Gordan notes: "The prominence of Jews in the revolution and early Weimar Republic is indisputable, and this was a very serious contributing cause for increased anti-Semitism in post-war years. It is clear then that the stereotype of Jews as socialists and communists led many Germans to distrust the Jewish minority as a whole and to brand Jews as enemies of the German nation."<sup>[41]</sup> According to Encyclopaedia Judaica: "In some countries Jews became the leading element in the legal and illegal Communist parties and in some cases were even instructed by the Communist International to change their Jewish-sounding names and pose as non-Jews, in order not to confirm right-wing propaganda that presented Communism as an alien, Jewish conspiracy."<sup>[42]</sup>

## Austria

The leaders of the Austro-Marxism movement were "virtually all" Jewish and included Rudolf Hilferding, Otto Bauer, Max Adler, Gustav Eckstein, and Friedrich Adler.<sup>[41]</sup> On 12 November 1918, Jews played a "central role" in the failed coup d'état led by Egon Kisch and his Red Guards.<sup>[43]</sup>

## United States

During the 1930s, in the United States, Jews, largely immigrants from Eastern Europe, accounted for about 40 to 50 percent of Communist Party membership and at least a comparable proportion of the Party's leaders, journalists, theorists, and organizers.<sup>[30]</sup> Six out of the "Hollywood Ten" filmmakers who refused to testify before Congress about whether they were associated with Communism, and ten out of the nineteen brought before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) were Jews. Roughly 50 percent of the members of the American Communist terrorist organization "The Weather Underground" were Jewish, including Jane Alpert, Kathy Boudin, Judith Alice Clark, David Gilbert, Ted Gold, Naomi Jaffe, John Jacobs, Michael Kazin, Bernardine Dohrn, Howard Machtinger, Eric Mann, Eleanor Raskin, Jonah Raskin, Terry Robbins, Susan Rosenberg, Robert Roth, Mark Rudd, and Susan Stern. The Weather Underground conducted numerous domestic bombing operations, including bombing the Pentagon and the United States Capitol. Historian Norman Cantor notes that: "During the heyday of the Cold War, American Jewish publicists spent a lot of time denying that — as 1930s anti-Semites claimed — Jews played a disproportionately important role in Soviet and world Communism. The truth is until the early 1950s Jews did play such a role."<sup>[44]</sup>

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